

EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE AT AMBLESIDE.

A conference, organized by Mr. Wynn-Wilkinson, H.M. Inspector of Schools for the county of Westmorland, has been held by the Education Authority of Miss Mason's school, the "House of Education," Ambleside. The object of the conference was to consider what could be provided in schools at Ambleside for the use of children of parents by books and things which have for the past 15 years been worked with excellent results in connection with the education of the children in the Parents' Review School. Invitations were sent to the head teachers representing various schools in the county, and to those who had, in addition to these, the Education Authority as well as the secondary schools were represented. The teachers from the following schools attended: Public elementary schools—Misses Sotherthwaite (Kendal), Shrewsbury (Kendal), Gothic (Ambleside), Stevenson (Ambleside), Miss Mason's (Ambleside), Aspinwall (Ambleside), Fulmer (Grasmere), Beatrix (Ambleside), Hayes (Trentbeck), Lister (Kendal), Gardner's (Kendal), and the Head Master, Mr. Stephen, T. Hodge (Grange), Jackson (Warcop), Anderson (Staveley), Webster (Wetherby), and Mr. George, Abraham (Wetherby). Preparatory schools—Mr. T. C. (Windermere); Secondary schools—Misses Reynolds (Kendal), Warren (Kendal), Local Education Authority, Mr. Tupper (Kendal). The chairman was Mr. Wynn-Wilkinson, who apologized for the absence of Mr. Gilkes, the chairman of the County Education Committee, and also for the absence of Mr. T. C. (Windermere), who had accepted an invitation to speak at the meeting of the Education Committee at Kendal on December 10th. Mr. Wynn-Wilkinson congratulated the conference on its representative character, and mentioned the work now being done to improve the curriculum. Mr. Wynn-Wilkinson asked what the essentials of an educational syllabus, and how far possible in elementary schools? (1) A curriculum for all children up to the age of 14 years; (2) English history as the pivot upon which a liberal curriculum should turn. (3) The free use of books by children during the school day, excepting in the case of (4) The airing of the school and the relief to the teacher which would accrue from the use of books. He then directed attention to the fact that the work of Miss Mason first especially in school had found how successful they were amongst the students at the "House of Education." Miss Mason said it was a great privilege for the school to accept her invitation to discuss a matter which concerned all who had education at heart. Education had been increased by her, and both times the publication of the "Suggestions for the consideration of teachers" by the Board of Education. The scheme she had in view was to set up on the lines of the primary school system, but worked for three or fifteen years with considerable success. She thought they might safely conclude by the presence of their chairman that the result of her suggestion should be taught to use the torch and charcoal, but not the pencil, and should have "picture-tables." Physical culture should include hygiene, physiology, and health. Books of science would also be some culture in order to give a child some self-knowledge and some power of self-direction. Handwriting, moreover, will be more easily learned if the book is written in large letters based on a census of card-board synd. —The Chairman asked how far such a syllabus could be made applicable to the requirements of the school. Mr. Tupper spoke with respect to science—Mr. Tupper thought that very little science could be taught in elementary schools. There might be a trifling introduction to natural history, but pure science was not essential. Mr. Lister (Kendal) said that in schools where the staff was adequate it might be possible to teach science, but that it was the loss of an educational nature and illustrative of common objects in life. But in schools moderately staffed he felt it would be better to give the children a knowledge of the world. The Chairman expressed the view that a specialized form of science-teaching should not be included in the curriculum of the ordinary school, and should be left to the technical and secondary schools—Miss Reynolds said it was well to have a lesson on morals in immediate connection with school work, and that the best way to do this was through illustration in music.—The Chairman remarked that Miss Mason's suggestion was that literature and history were to include the crucial subjects, and that the two subjects should be given a common ground of agreement. She also thought by the free use of books much time might be saved, and that would be a great advantage to the teacher. The Chairman returned the question of his tax on the pupil of instruction. Mr. Stewart enquired how the books were to be paid for. Mr. Wynn-Wilkinson said whether charge could be made per child, and thought the education authorities would supply text-books and copies of all books for teaching purposes. Mr. Tupper saw a great difficulty in this suggestion, because education was becoming so costly, and he felt that taxpayers could not be easily taxed. Mr. Wynn-Wilkinson said that his school he expected these would be one cent of the children who were able to buy their own books, while he anticipated a donation from the money raised by the parents. Mr. Tupper agreed also, and felt that some time ago this system would have been easier, but it was now, thanks to the increase in the cost of living, that the expenses of his children were great indeed. Mr. Gardner generally favored Miss Mason's proposal. The parents of the children in the schools already spent much on education, but that the personal possession of a book was lucrative and that the world is a great library. Many of the money of the community gets tall very tightly, it has something to do with the cost of education in this sense, and that the local authorities ought to be willing to cover the schools in the matter.